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Message from the Mayor

It's that time of year again! Our kids packed their backpacks and went back to school on Monday – and I had the pleasure of meeting with parents and youngsters at Peabody Early Childhood Center in Ward 6. It was a beautiful, late summer day and the children were eager to begin a new year of learning.

As our readers know, I'm a firm believer that we can and we must reform our public education system in the District. Like any urban area, we face an uphill battle with so many socioeconomic challenges among our students and too little parental involvement in our communities. I'm working hard with our Superintendent, Dr. Clifford B. Janey, to set a higher standard of learning in the Nation's Capital.

To reach our goals, it takes all of us. That means government, the private sector, public schools, public charter schools, private schools, nonprofits and the private sector, all working in tandem. And it's my belief that this year will show that we're making progress by working together.

For example, on August 24 I took a tour of Ketcham Elementary School in Southeast. Schools like Ketcham are using money that was allocated under the "Ready Schools Initiative" for school facilities improvements to help prepare for the opening of the school year. In March 2005, I proposed and the Council approved the allocation of \$6 million of the 2005 cash reserves for facilities improvements.

Of that \$6 million, nearly \$158,000 was designated for Ketcham. I visited Ketcham not just to look at what Ketcham did but also to show my confidence in the system as a whole and the work that's been done this summer to turn our classrooms into warm, welcoming environments for learning. Ketcham used its money for painting, plastering, floor repairs, lighting repairs, plumbing, air conditioning repairs and improvements to special ed classrooms.

Our charter schools are also a tremendous part of our public education efforts. To help support them, I visited Elsie Whitlow Stokes public charter school on August 23. Stokes is one of our shining examples of how choice in education is helping create a diverse range of offerings for parents and students in the District.

Consider this: Teachers at Elsie Whitlow teach students both English and Spanish in the classroom – and they are deeply committed to providing a well-rounded education in reading, math, social studies, science and the arts. During my visit to the school, I announced that charter schools in DC will receive more than \$5 million each year over the next three years as a result of a US Department of Education grant.

It's my hope that our recent efforts pave the way for a great school year!



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Department of Parks and Recreation

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Commission on the Arts and Humanities

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Hands on DC

DC Convention and Tourism

DC Public Library

Federal Substance Abuse Grant

On August 24, I was pleased to accept a check for \$3.45 million, the amount of a federal grant awarded to the District to promote an integrated system for treating people with co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse/alcohol disorders. Charles A. Curie, administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, joined me at my weekly press briefing, held at Ketcham Elementary School in Southeast.

I believe people should be able get help for their substance abuse and mental health problems at the same time without having to go to two separate systems for treatment – it's more effective and more efficient.

With this grant, the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and the Department of Health (DOH) can build on the work begun in 2003 to establish an integrated approach to service delivery that includes screening, clinical assessment and treatment regardless of which agency a person chooses to go to for help.

During the first year of the five-year grant, the objective is to train clinicians to screen, assess and treat persons with co-occurring disorders and train program managers to ensure these services are integrated into the individual's overall treatment. In addition to evaluating the program's outcomes, the George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services will collaborate in developing a learning network for the project.

DMH Director Martha B. Knisley and DOH Director Gregg Pane, MD, joined me and Mr. Curie for the announcement. In 2003, I joined city officials from DMH and DOH and signed a charter agreement committing the departments to create a system of care for people with co-occurring disorders. This ensured that that integrated treatment would be provided regardless of whether an individual sought treatment through the mental health system or the substance abuse treatment system.

Sign Up for a Library Card! National Library Card Sign-up Month at the DC Public Library

Did you know the library card is *The Smartest Card* in your wallet? September is National Library Card Sign-up Month and the District of Columbia Public Library wants everyone to get a library card. Parents can get involved too by making sure their children have the most important school supply of all – a library card.

District libraries have a number of library card designs to choose from, including one created by an 11-year old resident. The card allows you to check out books, CDs and DVDs from any of our 27 libraries, reserve a computer, do online research from your home or office on the library's website, and more.

Here are tips on how to get your free library card:

- **Am I eligible for a card?** If you live, work, pay property taxes or attend school in the District of Columbia, you can get a library card.
- **What if I don't live in DC?** You're also eligible for a free card if you live in Maryland's Montgomery or Prince George's counties or Virginia's Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun or Prince William counties, and the cities of Alexandria and Falls Church.
- **How do I apply?** You must apply for a card in person and show one of the following: current identification that gives both your name and address, i.e., driver's license, utility bill, etc., or valid documentation that shows you work in the District of Columbia.

If you register for your card during September, you will get an attractive "I carry the smartest card in DC" sticker to wear and a bookmark, "30 Days, 30 Ways: Using Your Library Card in September," showing how to enrich your life at the library.

To get a library card any time of the year just drop by. To find a library near where you live or work, visit dclibrary.org.



Promoting Fitness Initiative

The summer may be winding down, but thanks to recent efforts, next summer will include free swimming in the District once again.

All Washington, DC public swimming pools will be open to the community, free of charge, through September 30, 2006 thanks to a \$200,000 donation from Kaiser Permanente of the Mid-Atlantic States, Inc. I made this announcement two weeks ago at Francis Swimming Pool in Northwest.

This effort is a result of collaboration on my part, along with members of the DC Council and the District's Department of Parks and Recreation, and marks what Kaiser Permanente hopes will be an ongoing partnership with the DC government to provide more opportunities for healthy eating and active living for the residents of the city.

On behalf of the city, I'd like to express our tremendous appreciation for this generous donation from Kaiser Permanente. I've always said that the key to our success as a city is creating innovative partnerships like the one we announced with Kaiser. It takes all of us – government, the private sector, nonprofits and other organizations – to create a successful and healthy community.

In addition to free swimming access, Kaiser Permanente will repair and replace the filtration system at Banneker Pool in Northwest Washington, sponsor a Fall 2005 Swim Meet, and explore ways to help expand the city's lifeguard corps.

District's Southeast Tennis and Learning Center Is Honored

My hometown tennis center received a great national award last week.

On August 27, I was happy to participate in a ceremony sponsored by the United States Tennis Association (USTA) honoring staff and students from the District's Southeast Tennis and Learning Center with its "Tennis Facility Youth Program of the Year" award. As a regular visitor and tennis player at the center, I was particularly thrilled to see the USTA give the award to the center.

Former District of Columbia first lady Cora Masters Barry, founder of the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center, joined me, along with 20 city youth, ages 8 to 15. The ceremony took place Saturday, August 27, at 2 pm during the US Open tennis tournament at Arthur Ashe Stadium in Flushing Meadows, New York.

I was thrilled to join Mrs. Barry and District youngsters for this exciting and well-deserved honor. With its athletic and educational facilities, the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center has broken new ground in providing our city's youth with positive activities that encourage them to grow as athletes, scholars, and citizens. The USTA should be commended for giving this award to the center.

The \$5.1 million Southeast Tennis and Learning Center was the brainchild of Cora Masters Barry, who is also the founder of the nonprofit Recreation Wish List Committee. The center is the result of a seven-year public/private partnership between the District's Department of Parks and Recreation and the Recreation Wish List Committee. Currently, as many as 200 children per day use the center's facilities. Members of the community have access to the center during non-school hours.

The Tennis and Learning Center, located at 701 Mississippi Avenue, SE, was the first tennis and technology-focused recreation center in the District of Columbia. For more information, please visit: recreationwishlist.org.



District Activities



Mayor Williams visited Peabody Early Childhood Center in Northeast, where he greeted students as they began their first day of school. Peabody is known as the "gateway" to the Capitol Hill Cluster School.



Mayor Williams distributes backpacks filled with school supplies to 500 District children grades K-6 at the Sherwood Park and Recreation Center in Northeast.

Community News

- [Mayor Mourns Death of Lt. Yvette Tate, Leader of Executive Protection Unit](#)
- [Mayor Warns Potomac River Plant's Closure Threatens DC, Urges It Be Restarted](#)
- [Base Realignment and Closure Commission Votes to Close Walter Reed](#)

Upcoming Events

[View All News Releases](#)

9/11	America Supports You Freedom Walk 10 am – 2 pm Pentagon South Parking lot asyfreedomwalk.com
9/16	5th Annual Judge Aubrey E. Robinson, Jr. Memorial Mental Health Conference 8 am – 4pm Renaissance Washington DC Hotel 999 9th Street, NW
9/28 – 10/2	Duke Ellington Jazz Festival locations around the city dukeellingtonjazzfest.org

